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C O N F I D E N T I A L LJUBLJANA 000187

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SI](#)

SUBJECT: SLOVENIAN PRESIDENT DRNOVSEK LUNCHES WITH COM,  
EMPHASIZES GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH PM JANSKA

REF: 04 LJUBLJANA 420

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas B. Robertson for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY. At lunch 21 March with President Drnovsek, COM discussed Embassy security, got Drnovsek's positive assessment of the first 100 days of the Janska government, and heard that PM Janska and Drnovsek are meeting weekly. Drnovsek encouraged more U.S. work on global environmental protection, said he felt Janska would pay a political price if he chooses to send Slovenes into Iraq, reflected on the deep post-WWII divisions that still plague older generations of Slovenes, and joined in expressing disappointment in the quality of the Slovene media. Drnovsek made several negative remarks about former PM and protege Rop and former President Kucan. Drnovsek expects to meet Croatian President Mesic "at the border" on 24 March. END SUMMARY.

[12.](#) (C) COM and DCM lunched at Brdo Castle 21 March with Slovene President Janez Drnovsek and the Secretary General of his Cabinet, Matjaz Nahtigal. This was the Ambassador's first extended private meeting with Drnovsek since his credentials presentation in September 2004. Drnovsek looked healthy, and engaged in a very wide ranging discussion that touched a number of global foreign policy issues as well as our bilateral relationship with Slovenia, the Slovene media, post-WWII reconciliation, and the new Janska government. Drnovsek sprinkled his comments with negative references to former President Milan Kucan and former Prime Minister Tone Rop.

#### Embassy Security and the Portals

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[13.](#) (C) Right off the top, responding to Drnovsek's question about his impressions from his first six months in Slovenia, COM made mention, among the many positive impressions he has, of the difficulty in this small capital to get closure on some bilateral issues. Specifically he mentioned to Drnovsek the ongoing issue of the security of our chancery and our long-standing request to close the small side street next to it. Drnovsek acknowledged the dangers of terrorism, especially in places like Slovenia which are soft targets and said he recognized the difficulties in getting Slovenians to take the threat seriously. COM also mentioned our current frustrations in trying to work out an implementing agreement between the U.S. Department of Energy and the Slovene Ministry of Finance in order to install radiation detection portals on Slovene borders. The latest "catch" in this effort is resistance on the part of the EC to accept language agreed to by Slovenia and the U.S. While we didn't expect Drnovsek to have specific answers to these issues, Nahtigal wrote down the concerns and -- we assume -- will relay the fact that they were mentioned to the Prime Minister's office and the MFA.

#### The Janska Government

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[14.](#) (C) Drnovsek believes PM Janez Janska is doing a "good" job and that the first 100 days of the new administration went well. He seems pleased with the level of cooperation he and Janska enjoy. Drnovsek said he and Janska meet once a week and that it is a "paradox" that they have closer cooperation than Drnovsek enjoyed with his (hand-picked) successor and now LDS opposition leader, Tone Rop. Drnovsek still bears scars from his difficult handover to Rop, calling him "not a patient man." (The taciturn Drnovsek is a model of patience.) He criticized Rop for being too weak so far in opposition saying that Janska was much tougher in the role (note: when Drnovsek was PM!) than LDS has been to this point. (In fairness to the opposition, a 100-day "honeymoon period" traditionally given for a new Government to get itself together with limited media and political criticism has just ended.) When asked by the COM about a possible future SDS/LDS "grand" coalition, Drnovsek did not discount this scenario but also stressed that such an option would have been much more likely if he had not given up the PM's job and stepped down from the LDS leadership. "A grand coalition would be impossible with Rop." Drnovsek, who is an economist by training, expressed some reservations about the way the new center-right government is handling the economy. On the

subject of privatization, one of the Jansa's government big objectives, Drnovsek said it was a "big challenge," but he hoped for "gradual" changes that "make sense in the market."

#### Societal Divisions from WWII

15. (C) COM asked Drnovsek about his thoughts on the sensitive subject of the societal divisions he still senses between the survivors of the old partisans and "domobranc" (home guard) of WWII. Drnovsek agreed that these divisions remain and suggested they are actually even deeper than they might appear. For the older generation, they are, in Drnovsek's view, too sensitive to touch or resolve. He sees no leaders in that generation willing to take the lead on the discussion, admit excesses, seek forgiveness, or reach reconciliation. "(Former President Milan) Kucan could have done something, but he didn't." Drnovsek cited a specific case of a prominent family in which brothers still don't speak due to WWII differences. It is hard to expect societal reconciliation if families still can't reconcile, Drnovsek said.

#### Media

16. (C) Every decent lunch in Slovenia includes two things: good domestic wine and conversation about the shortcomings of the Slovene media. After the Ambassador described his concern that the Slovene media (all major dailies are center-left) were "unbalanced," Drnovsek agreed and confirmed his own problems with media in the country. He noted the irony that in the 1980s Slovenia's journalists wrote against the non-aligned policies of the former Yugoslavia and were largely pro-West and pro-NATO. Now, many of these same personalities have swung 180 degrees back to a "Yugo-nostalgia." On a more positive note, Drnovsek thinks that the departure of Kucan from the political scene has probably helped the media situation since Kucan was often thought to be meddling and exerting pressure on the media. Drnovsek wryly smiled and noted that he doesn't do that. He added that the Russians also complain a lot about the Slovenia's press "tough" stance on Russian policies.

#### Iraq

17. (C) COM asked Drnovsek his views on Jansa's slight movements forward in Iraq policy over the past few months, noting also the strong backlash in the media. Drnovsek indicated that public opinion and the media remain very opposed to sending Slovenes into Iraq. But he said frankly that if he had been PM two years ago at the time of the war, Slovenia would have been part of the coalition. Ex-PM Rop was unwilling to take this risk. Now, Slovenia is probably less inclined to go, since it sees the Italians and others looking for ways to withdraw. Jansa could send troops if he wanted, but the opposition and media would make him pay a big political price. Drnovsek said it would be easier if troops could go and help train outside of Iraq, or if they were part of a larger NATO operation. Besides, in terms of U.S. policy towards Iraq, "our input doesn't matter" to the U.S., he concluded.

#### Environment

18. (C) Climate change and the environment were clearly on Drnovsek's mind as well. He made strong points on the subject and related a story about riding with President Bush from the airport to Brdo for the Bush/Putin summit in June 2001. During the ride, Drnovsek says he told the President that the U.S. needed to position itself better on Kyoto and climate change, in general. According to Drnovsek, the President listened and agreed. The environment is a very important issue in Slovenia and the U.S. must do a better job selling its positions. Drnovsek said if he had more information about our efforts, he could use it in his public presentations as well. (NOTE: Nahtigal now has from us our latest climate change points and we intend to make them a key part of a speech COM will give 6 April on U.S. foreign policy. END NOTE.)

#### Commission on Corruption

19. (C) COM attended a dip corps briefing earlier on 21 March given by Drago Kos, Chairman of the independent Commission on the Prevention of Corruption (and who is said to have differences with PM Jansa). Since Kos has worked

closely with the Embassy and the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, Ambassador pointed out the value of the Commission to Slovenia's reputation and wondered what would replace it if

it were legislated out of existence (as has been suggested could happen given the bad blood between Kos and Jansa). Drnovsek said that anti-corruption was a pillar of Jansa's successful election campaign and it would be hard for him, as PM, to undo the Commission's mandate. (COMMENT: We concur that Jansa remains strongly anti-corruption and we think the brouhaha over legislating the Commission out of existence has passed over for now. Still, we doubt that the Kos/Jansa feud, which goes back to the days of independence and reportedly involves Jansa's strong feelings that Kos is too closely allied to Kucan, has not been put to rest completely. END COMMENT)

Tour d'horizon  
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10. (C) Over the course of the lunch, Drnovsek demonstrated his interest and mastery of foreign policy when discussing several current issues:

-- Croatia: Drnovsek said his team is working to set up a meeting "at the border" with Croatian President Mesic for this Thursday, March 24. No other details were offered.

-- China: Drnovsek thinks China is actually quite helpful to the West on most issues, save for Taiwan and Tibet, and noted that the West continues to race into China with investment. COM stressed U.S. opposition to the lifting of the EU arms embargo.

-- Middle East: Recalling his meetings with Arafat and the irony that Arafat was a Nobel Peace Prize winner who didn't sign up for peace and that Sharon is a "hawk" who is working hard to make peace, Drnovsek senses positive developments in the region. Going back to the failed Barak/Arafat Camp David negotiations in 2000, the politician in Drnovsek came through and said that Barak sacrificed his own government and political future by giving in too much and then not having anything to sell back home after making the concessions. Drnovsek has worked with a French political consultant who also had Barak as a client. The consultant told Drnovsek that he had declined Barak's request to lead his second campaign and advised him not to even run because it was so hopeless. (Note: the current situation in Lebanon and Syria was not discussed.)

-- India/Pakistan: Drnovsek met Musharraf last year at UNGA, but has never traveled to India or Pakistan. He sees this as a "critical area of the world," however, and said he has a standing invitation to visit India after having welcomed Indian leaders to Slovenia some time ago.

ROBERTSON

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